



PRONiCA

News from Nicaragua

March 2010
Vol 23 No 1

Published quarterly by the ProNica Committee of the Southeastern Yearly Meeting since 1987
Quakers Empowering Nicaraguans

Phenomenal Comparisons

Lois Horton, Friends Witness Tourist

Four members of our Canadian Rotary Club in Nipigon, Ontario, went to Nicaragua on a six-day Friends Witness Tour. This was our second visit to Nicaragua – we had travelled there in November 2008 and had seen projects organized by the Rainbow Network from Missouri. We visited La Chureca dump where the lunch program is run by Los Quinchos.

Our visit inspired us to contribute to the feeding program. One member paid for uniforms and books to send 40 students to school for the 2008-09 school year. Members of our community contributed sufficiently to accomplish this – quite a task as we live in an economically depressed area of Canada. Our main industry is forestry; the pulp and paper mill in the next town closed 3 years ago, and the plywood mill in our town burned down 2 years ago. We have no other major industries in our two communities of about 2500 people. School children and families contributed money towards this project.

Our trip this year was organized so that we could visit the school at the dump, assist with the feeding program, and learn more of the work in Nicaragua by Los Quinchos and ProNica.

It was a most heart-warming and heart-breaking experience. We visited Los Quinchos' Cultural Center in San Marcos and learned about their desperate financial situation.

Donations from Europe are insufficient. They have reverted to cooking with wood and not using their vehicles. Staff

earn only \$150 a month. They are selling their vehicles and the children likely went home, or somewhere safe, for a month. Staff travel long hours by bus and walk into the dump to feed the children. There is no money for milk! Staff will be laid off until conditions improve.



Five La Chureca children are ready for school

The Quinchos project is a most positive and inspiring one!

We saw the boys'

accommodations at the farm – a safe place to live, go to school, and be rehabilitated from life on Managua streets.

Children first go to the Filter House in Managua where they must give up their use of glue. When ready, they move out to the farm. There, they have chores, learn crafts, and on weekends take part in cultural training, including folk dancing. We also visited the girls' home – a place of refuge for beautiful children who have suffered numerous abuses. Their home is also located in San Marcos where they have chores, attend the local school,

see *Phenomenal* on page 3

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ProNica's Mission is building sustainable cross-cultural relationships between the people of Nicaragua and North America using Quaker values.

ProNica's Vision is solidarity that empowers and educates Nicaraguans and North Americans.

ProNica assists in creating and sustaining programs by and for the Nicaraguan people. These projects should hold promise for grassroots growth, arise from Nicaraguan needs and tradition, and provide not only survival but also empowerment.

ProNica's priorities are on community cohesiveness and economic development, non-violence training, health, education, agriculture and women's empowerment. We seek to link Nicaraguan people with concerned individuals internationally to promote understanding and mutual action. We educate those who seek information or wish to serve.

Our work is accomplished by an international core of dedicated volunteers and staff who seek to embody Quaker principles of consensual decision making and action and respect for that of God in everyone. This service project arose from a deep concern over the international exploitation of the Nicaraguan people and resources and a wish to respond in practical and constructive ways.

ProNica, Incorporated is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt corporation under the spiritual care of the Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) with offices in St. Petersburg, Florida and Managua, Nicaragua. ProNica is a registered Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in Nicaragua.

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Stateside Update

Davida Johns, Stateside Administrator



ProNica welcomes Administrative Assistant Melissa Ajabshir to the stateside office in Florida. Melissa lived in Germany and UAE where she home-schooled her three children. Her international experience will enhance her understanding of ProNica's mission as she assumes many of the routine tasks that keep ProNica functioning.

Look for her handwritten notes in your donation thank-you letters. Welcome Melissa. □



Rise of Meeting in December 2009
The Managua Worship Group, under the care of St Petersburg (Florida) Meeting. Meeting for Worship is twice monthly. Confirm schedule at 2266.3216.

for any occasion, send a
Gift of Life

ProNica sends a hand-calligraphied certificate acknowledging your financial donation in celebration or memory of a person or event

Phenomenal con't from page 1 and participate in weekend activities.

We visited the dump three times and saw the school, the church and all the horror that living there brings! The children who attend the Quinchos' feeding program are fed one meal a day – usually rice, meat and tortillas. Those who attend the school learn the basics such as writing their names. Some children, who do not attend school, lack those basics. One boy brought his report card to Lillian and was so proud of his accomplishment! The uniforms were remarkably clean after almost a year of wear – it is hard to imagine how they keep their blouses and shirts so white in a dump.

Conditions at La Chureca dump are deplorable. Homes are meager shacks; air is polluted with burning tires and garbage, and pools of dirty green water are everywhere. The danger is incredible. We were safe because the Quinchos staff and Lillian are respected within the dump. We saw the results of an attack on one woman for 40 cordobas - about \$2. Los Quinchos and Lillian provide some basic first aid for the children, and any adults, who attend the center with whom there so much love is shared!

The comparison between the San Marcos children and those in the dump is simply phenomenal. The children in San Marcos are clean, clear-eyed, healthy and happy. Those at the dump show signs of malnutrition – glazed eyes, distended stomachs and reddish-colour hair. These Chureca children seem quite happy and playful. Soccer is important but their equipment is minimal.

During a game, one very-worn soccer ball went over the wall into the polluted greenish pond. A boy dived in to rescue it – who knows what was under the surface! On our

first day we brought finger paint. They were so creative with this new toy! Our second visit, we took a birthday cake, a rare treat in Nicaragua, to Juan Carlos, one of the Quinchos staff celebrating his 19th birthday. Even though it was his vacation, he worked so he could assist during our visit.

Los Quinchos students have a chance to complete their education. Several have graduated from high school. We met Ricardo, a young father who graduated from university. This is really hopeful for the future of Nicaragua.

We also visited the Acahualinca Women's Center hair-dressing training and health facilities. They run a day care

nearby. What a wonderful place! It was a beautiful clean building and a positive indication of the work by Non Government Organizations in Nicaragua.

Last year, our aim was to save the children.

The themes of literacy, health, water and sanitation are always

essential to Rotary. Our club will continue again this year to arrange to provide uniforms and books for the children at the dump. Before we left San Marcos, we donated a small amount of money and new clothes to the Quinchos project. We will continue to contribute to the feeding program. We hope that other organizations and individuals will also step forward and help to keep this program alive.

Thanks to ProNica and Lillian Hall for arranging such an inspiring visit to Nicaragua. We will return! □



Nipigon Rotarians with Quinchos staff

2010 project partner grants

Five partners were awarded a total of \$55,772 for ten projects:

\$6,500 to Casa Materna for medical procedures and utility bills; \$4,501 to Acahualinca Women's Center for medical procedures and supplies; \$865 to Casa de los Niños for medical procedures and education; \$4,205 to Mama Licha Clinic for medical procedures and supplies; \$3,970 to Acahualinca Beauty School for instruction and equipment; \$300 to Acahualinca Library for textbooks and supplies; \$1,174 to Acahualinca Library for supplies; \$1,927 to Los Quinchos for their library; \$15,445 to Yahoskas for food; \$18,000 to La Chureca for food.

Through your generous and continued donations, ProNica is able to Empower our Nicaraguan Project Partners. Thank you for your support.

Education Obstacles Overcome

Lillian Hall, Program Coordinator

Farah, a beautiful 14-year-old in La Chureca garbage dump, lives in a shack with her 16-year-old brother Armando and a 14-year-old boy with no family. Her mother has to live during the week in Granada in order to have a poorly paid job as a cook. Her younger brother Erlin is fortunate to live at the Quinchos farm for young boys in San Marcos. Farah is one of the teenagers who eats and helps at the Quinchos project at La Chureca and one of the children benefited by both the ProNica-supported lunch program and the contribution of school uniforms, shoes, and school supplies. She proudly graduated from 6th grade in late November and looks forward to going on to secondary school (combined junior and senior high school in Nicaragua). Many girls her age in Nicaragua are already mothers or prostitutes. Farah has bigger dreams.

Like the other 40-plus children at the Quinchos project in La Chureca, Farah recently received a new school uniform, school shoes, a backpack and school supplies thanks to a generous donation by a small, but committed group of Rotarians in the small town of Nipigon, Ontario, 1000 miles north of Toronto. Members of this Rotary club have twice visited La Chureca and taken on the task of raising the money to buy these uniforms and supplies. Their contribution will not only cover the uniforms and such, but will create a small fund for other hidden expenses that frequently keep children from finishing school. The Nipigon group is tiny and yet size doesn't matter when it comes to people on a mission.

The day we distributed the donations, the younger children jumped in excitement while waiting for their new uniforms as the older children waited patiently. Later they proudly stood for photographs with big smiles. I am not sure that these little ones know how lucky they are.

The Sandinista government re-established free education two years ago after 17 years of semi-privatized education in which many children were left out of the educational process. "No todo es color de rosas" as we say in Nicaragua, not everything is the color of roses. The reality is, even for children who do not live in a garbage dump, attending school is not without obstacles. This year 700,000 children will not attend school and, of those who start first grade, nearly 50% will drop out by fifth grade.

The barriers seem small to us outsiders, but are crucial to these families. Many families simply cannot afford the

school uniform, shoes, backpack and school supplies - about \$50 dollars a year. Other parents don't send their children to school on an empty stomach because the children will either complain about being hungry or fall asleep at their desk. Hunger prevents learning. In the dump and often in the countryside, children help bring in money, however small the amount.



Chureca boy reading

For older students like Farah, the obstacles are even larger. While there is a nice, little elementary school right in the dump, there is no secondary school. Any student who has the good fortune to be able to attend secondary school must walk through the dump, then to a bus line, take the bus as far as it goes, then walk the rest of the way to the school. Bus fare is \$2.50 cordobas each way, roughly 15 cents US. However, for these children and their families, that small amount may be insurmountable. In fact, some of these kids who dream to go on simply cannot for the lack of bus fare. Even if the bus fare problem is overcome, there are sometimes other hidden costs such as required tennis shoes and physical education uniforms. These seemingly minor expenses are demoralizing for these families and become reasons for keeping the kids out of school.

Thanks to the commitment of a small group in a small town in northern Ontario, a world away from Nicaragua, we will be able to help keep these kids in school, give them an alternative to scavenging in other people's wastes, as their parents are forced to do, and keep their dreams alive. □

My Education about Education

Gabe Moe-Lobeda, Eckerd College 2010 delegate

In the 1980's, literacy was promoted throughout Nicaragua. Tens of thousands of volunteers, both students and adults, were trained to teach people to read and write. By the end of the campaign the illiteracy rate was reduced to 23 percent. This effort shows not only the value that Nicaraguans placed on basic education, but also the caring they have for one another that so many people would give their time to teach others.

Today primary education is free for all children. Though school was not in session in January during our delegation, we met many kids who only attended classes with the aid and guidance of others. I learned of many reasons some kids choose not (or are not allowed) to attend school.

Foremost, time in school is not spent earning money. Countless kids work the streets for a few cordobas to help their family survive. Another reason is social status: the lack of a uniform shouts poverty and rather than face embarrassment, some simply don't go. Whatever the reason for non-attendance, it has led to a decline in literacy.

Free education helps poor families, but other problems prevent a proper education – the absence of materials in the classroom and understanding how education will benefit them in their future. To fix these problems through monetary means, the Nicaraguan government would need to spend even more of its budget on education which is extremely hard for such a poor country. Or, other countries and organizations need to donate money or supplies.

We learned that historically Nicaraguans placed high value on education. At Los Quinchos and La Chureca we saw first hand the time and effort that some give to help others receive an education. I think this effort gives hope toward the reality for all to receive an education in Nicaragua. □



Richland Friends raised \$1,000 for Nicaragua projects. Larry Jaloweic visited in December to attend the beauty school graduation and personally presented these school supplies for the preschool children in Acahualinca neighborhood. To support education projects, mark your check 'education.'

Beauty school graduation December 2009

Pam Haigh, ProNica Committee Clerk

In early December the beautician training classes end with a graduation celebration. This year, twenty-five graduates celebrated with their families. Most of the women will freelance on their own; some will become employed by shops. All will reap the benefits of their new marketable skill.



Pam Haigh with graduates and families

For these women from a poor neighborhood this opportunity means healthy food, education for their children, better lives for their families. Nicaraguans want to look and feel good about themselves, no matter

their income. Small beauty shops proliferate in the markets. Among rubber shoes, papayas, bicycle parts, hammocks, radios, tacos, plastic houseware, toys... one can easily get a haircut.

ProNica revived the Acahualinca beauty school, dormant for lack of funds, in 2006. Since then over 100 entry-level beauticians have graduated. A few years ago visitors noticed a very pregnant student in tears. They learned later that, though in early stages of labor, she wanted to finish the class so she could graduate. Such dedication is hard to imagine in our culture. These women understand the importance of acquiring this valuable, marketable skill.

I raise funds to keep the school operating. At Quaker gatherings, local festivals, with individuals, I cut hair in Worship Shearing, sharing photographs & stories. All funds go to this project. Other hairdressers have raised funds with hair-cutting parties in their shops or at someone's home. The newly-coifed then donate any amount they choose.

To participate, send your check marked, beauty school. Together, we can help twenty-five more women and their families find a better life. □

A Time for Birthing.....and a Time for Grieving

Kitty Madden

It was November 2nd – Day of the Dead – when Susana reached Casa Materna in Matagalpa. Her husband did not want her to come but she insisted. In 1999 she delivered a daughter and knew it was important to return for this birth. “I wonder if you remember me?” “Of course, we remember you, Susana,” the Casa staff assured her. “How have you been?” Quietly, she began to share her story.

“Ten years ago, I had a C-section and had a hard time after the surgery. Doctors discouraged me from having another child as it would ‘seriously endanger my life.’ Four years later I had a son. And once again I was warned. My husband also knew this. Three years ago when I was pregnant again, I had a miscarriage. The same thing happened last year. Each time, my family feared I might die because I was so weak from blood loss.”

It was fairly certain that Susana would now carry her present pregnancy to term with her due date just two weeks away. Her previous miscarriages had left her with fear but this time she hoped to have a tubal ligation after giving birth.

The Gift of Community

During her two weeks in the Casa, Susana touched us all deeply. For the other mothers, she quickly became a sister, watching out for the younger first-time mothers and encouraging the older women who, though they might be having their 10th child, were away from their homes for the first time in their lives.

Susana was generous in helping out in the kitchen or various parts of the house care. Her talent was making bracelets from threads; the mothers and staff treasure

the bracelets she gave us. On November 5th when we celebrated the Casa’s 18th birthday, Susana joined the other mothers sharing music, dance and role playing.

Susana also took time to write the following prayer on a page decorated with flowers: *Holy Father, I pray for all the loving and generous women of this Casa Materna.*

Bless them and protect them with your Holy Spirit.

Also, for myself and for all of us who are awaiting a happy outcome of our pregnancies, I ask that we be (held) in your hands. Amen. Susana Zeledon I live in Piedra de Agua (Stone of water) Date: 6 de noviembre, 2009 Hora: 8:30 am

And to the staff she added: *You don’t know how much I thank you all for the kind and beautiful ways you (have) treated me.*



Susana Zeledon Rayo

PRESENTE! PRESENTE! PRESENTE!

Some of the mothers who shared a room with Susana felt she had a premonition. She awakened them one night to point out a green light over her bed (a light that only she could see). Some thought it might have been a lightening bug but even with the lights turned on, they found nothing. “I think,” she told them solemnly, “that it is the light of death.”

The morning of November 17th, Susana left for the hospital and gave birth to her 3rd child in the early evening hours. However, this time, despite vigilant efforts on the part of hospital staff and multiple transfusions, nothing could be done to stop the hemorrhaging as her life ever so slowly ebbed away. With family members and Casa staff keeping vigil, Susana died the following afternoon as her newborn daughter was cared for in the neo-natal unit.

All the “What Ifs...”

We ask ourselves if things might have been different if Susana had been part of one of our

Follow Up groups or had opportunity to practice family planning. She was a fervent Catholic and knew the church forbids all but natural family planning. How we regret that Susana had not been one of those Casa mothers to have received a tubal ligation 10 years ago through the assistance of our ProNica friends. At the same time, we are aware that there are so many women in rural Matagalpa who share the same dilemmas that Susana faced and we are committed to redoubling our efforts at outreach and follow-up on their behalf.

Find this newsletter (PDF with color images) on the News page at www.ProNica.org

Giving Thanks

Susana was one of over 13,937 mothers we have sent to the Regional Hospital in these 18 years of the Casa's life; yet, she is the only one who has not survived her time of birthing there. We give thanks for the staff of hospital and also feel their pain at not having been able to keep Susana with us. We also know this is a pain that they experience many times each year.

As we continue to call Susana Zeledon present among us each day, we pray that her children will be lovingly cared for. We will continue Susana's prayer of thanksgiving, asking for protection for all our mothers. We are confident that she has entered now into the "green light" of eternal life, of everlasting LOVE!



Casa mothers-in-waiting

As we share Susana's story, we also thank all of you who supported us through your gifts to ProNica. Each year we face a deficit of some \$30,000 to help provide our basic

services for our "no income" mothers. In 2009, this deficit was reduced by two-thirds through donations sent through ProNica. Truly, you are all friends of the Casa Materna!

For more information:
www.casamaterna.org

Kitty Madden is the liaison between Casa Materna

Mary Ann Jackman and Friends of Casa Materna in Roseville, MI. □

Adam's Rib, Not Toe

Sarah McDuffie, Eckerd College 2010 delegate

Myths about contraceptives cause people to use them less, or not at all. For example, many men refuse to wear condoms because they claim a loss of feeling. Men pay less for a prostitute who insists on using a condom. Women are reluctant to get their tubes tied because if they meet another man, they might want to have his baby. Men fear vasectomies because they fear some pain. These myths need to be clarified, in order for a change to occur.

Many Nicaraguan women believe it's their duty to have as many children as God gives. Young mothers and their many children are a serious issue in Nicaragua. Most girls become mothers once their periods start. Their young bodies are drained of nutrients; some will have no teeth because their calcium goes to the developing fetus. At the Acahualinca Women Center I learned that some women will birth up to 24 babies, but only 3 or 4 will survive. A mixed blessing, because then these women struggle to care for their many children.

The Acahualinca Women's Center conducts weekly meetings to inform both women and men the truth about contraceptives. Promoters walk door-to-door to invite

women to these meetings.

The Center also takes steps to empower women. Most Nicaraguan men claim ownership of women. Men will have sex with their maids no matter their age. Men justify by saying that Eve was made from Adams rib and the Eve was the one who ate the forbidden fruit. Ergo, women are at fault for everything.

The Center refutes this argument saying that women were made from Adam's rib, not his toe. Women do not deserve to be stomped on. Women were made from the bone in the middle of the man's body in order to be equal with men. The rib bone is also under man's arms to be protected, not abused by men.

More women, and even some men, attend these informational meetings. Men's attendance is a big step. More education on contraceptives could really improve the well being of all Nicaraguan people. □

My delegation to Nicaragua was life altering. The culture is vibrant and people are sincere. Thanks to ProNica for hosting us. Christina Bowden, Washburn University □

CASA CUA'QUERA



Quaker House patio
in Managua, Nicaragua

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- * Name ProNica as a beneficiary in your estate planning. Contact us for details.
- * Friends Fiduciary Corporation has plans for now and later giving. Contact us for details.
- * Monthly gifts provide enduring/sustaining support for ProNica's Project Partners.
- * ProNica coordinates volunteers, work study delegations, Friends Witness Tours for groups of 4 to 6.

2010 Friends Witness Tour

8-18 October 2010

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of squashes is
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Chureca. Adults
and children
gleefully took
as many as
their arms could
carry.*

